



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

New Mexico Products Pipeline Environmental Impact Statement

October 25, 2002

Introduction

Welcome to the latest issue of the New Mexico Products Pipeline (NMPP) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) newsletter. This newsletter is published to keep the lines of communication open between the public and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) during the NMPP EIS process and to let you know where we are in the EIS process. This issue of the newsletter will address the following:

- ❖ Status of the EIS process
- ❖ Issues raised during scoping
- ❖ Proposed alternatives
- ❖ Technical Panel
- ❖ Longitudinal Seam Testing Program
- ❖ Shell's Revised Plan of Development and Stipulation development

Where are we in the EIS

Process?

The scoping process for the NMPP raised a number of significant issues and questions which led the BLM to require additional detailed information from the applicant (Shell Pipeline Company, LLC). The past few months have been spent generating and evaluating that data.

The third party consultant hired by the BLM is currently working on generating a Preliminary Draft of the EIS for review by the BLM and Cooperating and Reviewing Agencies. Comments from those agencies will be incorporated into the EIS and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will be published and available for public review in early 2003. After publication of the DEIS, there is a 45 day comment period which will include a series of public meetings to solicit comment on the document. Comments by mail will also be welcome. Once the public comment period has closed, the BLM and the

third party consultant will revise the DEIS in response to the comments received and will publish the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The BLM will use the FEIS in the formulation of a Record of Decision.

Issues Raised During Scoping

The 60-day scoping period, which began on December 28, 2001, officially closed on March 3, 2002. Comments were gathered at five public scoping meetings as well as by mail. Approximately 250 people participated in the 5 public meetings and 97 written comments were received. The BLM reviewed the public and agency comments and identified major issues for evaluation in the EIS. The majority of the comments and concerns can be broadly categorized as issues related to the protection of public safety, water quality, and threatened and endangered species.

Public Safety

To address concerns about public safety, the BLM and the Technical Panel is currently analyzing numerous sources of information to evaluate the structural integrity of the existing pipe, its proposed operation, type of product transported, and its designed safety features. When finalized, these studies and the associated analysis will be attached as appendices to the EIS. Residential areas and sensitive gathering areas, such as schools, in close proximity to the pipe will be identified and risk to these sensitive areas closely inspected. Risk to the public will be quantitatively evaluated in terms of the predicted number of spills, injuries, fatalities, fires, and explosions. In addition to the Proposed Action, pipeline alternatives and mitigation measures that might reduce risk to

public safety are being developed and similarly evaluated.

Ground and Surface Waters

Potential contamination of ground and surface waters was another issue identified by the BLM from public scoping comments. To evaluate the water quality issue, important groundwater locations will be delineated using US Geological Survey data to identify wells and major aquifers. The vulnerability of groundwater sources will be based, in part, by depth to water and co-location with karst terrain (i.e., rock characterized by fissures and caves). Once these sensitive areas are identified, then risk to the groundwater sources will be estimated and mitigation measures to reduce risk, including replacement and rerouting alternatives, will be developed and evaluated. For surface water, downstream drinking water intakes and aquatic biota will be identified and risk estimated for these locations. Pipeline alternatives and mitigation measures will be similarly evaluated to determine if risk to these resources can be reduced.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Finally, risk to threatened and endangered species (T&E species) will be evaluated. While risk to all T&E species will be evaluated both in the EIS and the Biological Assessment, the T&E species at greatest risk will be aquatic biota due to their confinement in the contaminated water and close proximity to the pipeline. Risk to these species will be evaluated in several scenarios that account for various spill volumes and streamflows. For T&E species in the Bitter Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, groundwater contamination also will be assessed. In addition to the Proposed Action, pipeline alternatives and mitigation measures



will be similarly evaluated to quantify the reduction in risk.

There were a number of comments which were considered by the BLM and will be responded to in the EIS document. Much of the information which has been requested by the BLM and generated by Shell are in direct response to comments, concerns and questions raised by the public and agencies during scoping.

For a complete summary of all the comments received, please follow the NMPP link on the BLM website (www.blm.nm.gov).

Proposed Alternatives

As a result of scoping and through the NEPA process, the BLM Interdisciplinary Team has developed alternatives for environmental analysis in the EIS. According to NEPA, reasonable alternatives must minimize potential impacts, satisfy the stated purpose and need of the proposed action, may not be speculative or remote, and must be technically and economically feasible.

In addition to the **Proposed Action**, four other pipeline alternatives are being evaluated: the **No Action** alternative; **Pipeline Replacement** in sensitive areas; **Pipeline Reroute** in selected sensitive areas; and the **Proposed Action with Enhanced Mitigation**.

If the **No Action** alternative is selected, the BLM would not issue a new ROW grant to Shell. Refined petroleum products would need to be transported to New Mexico by other

means.

The **Pipeline Replacement** alternative was developed to address public concerns about the existing pipeline's integrity and the potential effects of leaks on groundwater used by the public. Pipe replacement would involve the installation of new pipe parallel to the abandoned pipe within the same existing ROW.

Under the **Pipeline Reroute** alternative, portions of the existing pipeline could be relocated to less developed areas to reduce the risk to public safety. The alternative's new route would reduce the number of residence in close proximity to the pipeline and to minimize new disturbance by utilizing other existing right-of-way corridors as much as possible.

While the Proposed Action would meet or exceed current federal regulations for pipeline safety, the BLM has the authority to impose additional stipulations to ensure public safety and to protect the environment. In the **Proposed Action with Enhanced Mitigation**, the BLM identifies several additional mitigation measures to address the protection of public safety, water quality, and threatened and endangered species.

In addition to the pipeline alternatives, alternatives were evaluated for other facilities and associated power lines. One alternative that has been carried forward at this time for further analysis is an alternative for the **Willard-to-Mesa electrical transmission line**. The proposed route for the Willard to Mesa transmission line corridor passes through a large and unique playa complex to the east of



Willard, New Mexico. While the transmission lines and towers would be constructed following standards that would reduce and minimize collision and electrocution hazards to wildlife, the potential impact of these transmission lines might be further reduced by co-locating the portion of the transmission line that traverses the playa complex to a nearby railroad corridor.

Technical Panel on Pipeline Safety and Integrity

In response to a number of concerns raised regarding public safety, the BLM Albuquerque Field Office has selected a Technical Panel of experts to assist the BLM in the EIS process. The Technical Panel is specifically designed to provide the BLM with additional expertise on pipeline safety and integrity.

The Technical Panel is comprised of four technical experts:

Don Keyes, Chief Engineer with the Anchorage Joint Pipeline Office, began work with the BLM in 1970 as a Field Engineer for preconstruction activities for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, and has since remained involved in Alaskan pipeline safety. Mr. Keyes provides the BLM valuable practical expertise in the area of environmental and safety compliance.

Joe Dygas, Technical Design and Review Specialist with the Anchorage Joint

Pipeline Office, has worked in geology and physical sciences for the Federal Government since 1976. Mr. Dygas will advise the BLM on slope stability and other geologic safety concerns.

David Rudland, Principal Research Engineer with Engineering Mechanic Corporation of Columbus, has extensive experience in fatigue and fracture mechanics of pipeline engineering materials. Mr. Rudland will serve as the materials expert on the Technical Panel.

Rodrick Seeley, Director of the Southwest Region of the Office of Pipeline Safety will provide his expertise and experience to the Technical Panel.

Longitudinal Seam Test

Upon request of the BLM and the Technical Panel, Shell conducted a limited nondestructive evaluation of the ERW long seam pipe in the proposed NMPP. Shell subcontracted the seam inspection to IRISNDT, Inc. from Tulsa, Oklahoma. Between April 28, 2002 and May 13, 2002, the Longitudinal Seam Testing Program analyzed 30 sites, agreed upon by BLM, along the existing pipeline. Testing showed no indication of crack-like defects in the long-seam welds.

The NMPP Technical Panel is currently reviewing these findings and is actively working with the BLM to use this information,



in conjunction with other studies and tools, to evaluate pipeline integrity (including existing pipe) and operation to ensure public safety and environmental protection. Additionally, the Technical Panel is assisting the BLM to identify measures to decrease risk.

Shell's Plan of Development and BLM Stipulations

BLM provided Shell with a set of stipulations routinely used in pipeline construction projects. Shell has incorporated these stipulations into their revised Plan of Development (POD). It is intended that Shell's POD will soon be available on the BLM NMPP website (www.blm.nm.gov), and will be attached to the EIS as an appendix.

The BLM is in the process of formulating stipulations which could be attached to any decision on the project to further ensure that safety issues are addressed.

A Reviewing Agency meeting was held on October 16, 2002 to discuss and provide comment on the draft POD. Representatives from the BLM State and Field Offices, USFS, BIA, Pueblo of Zia, Shell, and project consultants attended the meeting. Shell will incorporate the comments received at this meeting in Shell's revised POD. Shell's POD will continue to be refined throughout the EIS process and will be finalized prior to the time of decision.

For More Information

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